

LETTERS

What Pharmacy Can Learn From Other Professions

To the Editor: Paul Hawken said, “All is connected...no one thing can change by itself.”¹ The face of pharmacy is changing as the healthcare system itself changes. With the recent opportunity of reimbursement for cognitive services through Medicare Part D MTMS legislation, to the ongoing battle for the pharmacy dollar from the consumer with free or \$4.00 generic prescriptions, to more pharmacies becoming full service health-care centers and providing onsite clinical assessments, the evolution of pharmacy is rapidly morphing. These new opportunities are a mixture of good and less than good ideas for pharmacy as a profession. When thinking about other professional areas, what could pharmacy learn from others? More importantly, as pharmacy educators, how can we integrate different professions’ thinking into our curriculum?

Legal and Accounting. When was the last time you walked into your lawyer’s office or your accountant’s office, unannounced, without an appointment, and asked for immediate service? The answer to that question is most likely never. Nearly all other professions require appointments for consultative services. Pharmacy is one of the most trusted professions in the world; however, can we purvey quality services prn with unknown prescription dispensing demands, particularly in community practice? With MTMS now established, pharmacists should begin considering fee-for-service consultative appointments. It firmly establishes professional value with customers and provides the opportunity for uninterrupted, higher quality service for the patient. As educators, the more opportunities during IPPE and APPE we can expose students to regarding professional services by appointment, the more students will feel empowered to initiate this type of model into their practices after graduation. At Butler, we have brought in pharmacists performing such services by appointment and exposed students on community practice rotations to their ideas and thoughts, as we do not yet have enough sites for all students to experience such practice opportunities.

Public Relations and Advertising. If you have ever had the opportunity to meet with a public relations or advertising representative for hire, the first thing they would show you is a portfolio of their work. With continuing professional development now on the horizon, there is every opportunity for pharmacists to begin providing the same to potential employers – a portfolio of their work. This could include not only a CV, but writing

samples, a hero file with letters of recommendation, any certifications or classes taken (both CE and non CE), and annual performance reviews. Any recruiter will note that documentation in site will be much more tangible for visual learners and hiring managers. The method to integration of this portfolio idea into the curriculum could best be served by providing outside professionals with more experience in writing portfolios that share their ideas with pharmacy students. This could easily be integrated into a professional practice course or an *Introduction to Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences* course.

Sales and Marketing. Pharmacists are in demand. The average student graduating still receives multiple offers for employment upon licensure. Students therefore do not have to market themselves actively for a job after college. Also, the major pharmacy chains are battling over pricing of prescriptions rather than focusing on high quality service or providing other ancillary services to their customers which in turn develops a unique market position for their companies. What if pharmacies took the Steve Jobs’ approach to providing excellent, unique appointment-only service as a separate section within the retail store? Many Macintosh computer owners will never go back to a PC simply because of the unique genius bar service that is provided by appointment at each and every Mac computer store. Pharmacists and students need to understand they are selling themselves each and every day. Everyone has a unique brand. In the new economy, it is not the product, but the customer’s experience that will make the inedible mark and keep the customer over the long term. Also, many pharmacists are incentivized for generic substitution. What if pharmacists proactively presented new generic switches to nearby physicians as a value-added professional service? We have addressed these issues at our institution with a new seminar series program that addresses marketing of a community-based pharmacy by bringing in pharmacists that have actually performed sales and marketing practices within their communities and offered discussions with students currently on community practice rotations about such practices.

Teaching and Education. Theoretically, all pharmacists, not just pharmacists in academia, are educators. Not only do we have to learn a lot of scientific details, but we also have to be able to communicate those ideas back to the customer at a level relevant to the customer. All pharmacists can learn from reading and studying great educators. To be a great educator means that one must also be a great life-long learner. Moving beyond just continuing education to a broader scope of customized continuing professional development will provide more educational and intellectually challenging areas for pharmacists to

master and in turn better serve their patients and profession. Also, as pharmacy educators, are we teaching our students how to teach others? Each pharmacy school should offer an academic rotation within advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs) and require it for all students. Preceptors in this arena are easy to find, for they are teachers at schools of pharmacy.

Coaching. Life coaches, wellness coaches, and business coaches are everywhere. In order to establish and foster long-term relationships with patients and retain business, pharmacists should focus on preventative services and coaching their patients around wellness rather than just discussing the treatment issues at hand with a prescription. Pharmacists are trained on how to help their patients create a wellness plan, a medication plan, long-term disease management plans and even diet and exercise plans for better health. At Butler University, we have APPEs for students in the campus wellness center called Healthy Horizons and directed by Dr. Carrie Maffeo. During this APPE, students check blood pressures, body composition, and perform other tests that expose them to the opportunity to coach patients in the realm of wellness without simultaneously focusing on dispensing.

Entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs tend to have a great combination of vision, technical knowledge, and ability to get things done. These are qualities from which any profession, including pharmacy, can benefit. Pharmacy used to be an entrepreneurial profession with independent community pharmacies being the rule rather than the exception in practice. However, we need to hold on to the entrepreneurial mindset firmly for future generations of pharmacists, as creativity and right-brained thinking will be the new commodity for employers in the years to come. At Butler, we have provided opportunities for students to not only create new over-the-counter products in the self-care course, but also assign them to “sell” their products to the class. Students need to understand the creative process in projects that not only allows them to break the ice among their team members, but more importantly, teaches them the creative process and the ability to think outside the box.

Artists. Finally, each and every one of us has the ability to be an artist in whatever profession we have chosen. The common thread among all artists is passion. In *The Reinvention of Work*, author Matthew Fox explains, “Jobs are to work as leaves are to a tree. If the tree is ailing the leaves will fall.”² He goes on to state the definition of the word job came from the Middle English word *gobbe*, which meant lump. Whereas, “work is about a role we play in the unfolding drama of the universe.” We need more rock stars in our profession. We should see them in the media, on television, on radio, online – talking

about drugs and all the amazing pharmacology that we can best explain. . . no other profession provides as much training on pharmacology. According to Fox, by sharing our work, we share “part of our display, part of the parading of our beauty” in the universe. Our work is beautiful. Every university that has a communications department, television channel, or radio station along with a school of pharmacy should host a program with pharmacy students discussing hot topics in healthcare. This exposes them to media challenges and therapeutic challenges simultaneously. Students must be able to think on their feet and effectively communicate, as all in media must do.

Pharmacy can learn a lot from other professions. The examples above are few of many others from which we can learn. By connecting to other professions and extracting their best practices, we have further opportunity to elevate ourselves. As we change, develop, and morph as a profession into the new millennium, those with the audacity to pioneer new and better ideas will ensure a profession that will not only evolve, but endure.

Erin Albert, PharmD, MBA
College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences
Butler University

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1. Hawken P. *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. Little Brown and Company, 1999.
2. Fox M. *The Reinvention of Work*. HarperCollins, 1994.

Good Outcome Development Is Good Science

To the Editor: We read with interest “Good Teaching Is Good Science” in the first issue of *AJPE* this year (vol 71, issue 1, page 10). The editorial made some excellent, and indeed important, points in drawing parallels between good scientific practices and good educational practices. However, the current efforts of schools and colleges of pharmacy to articulate, map, and assess curricular outcomes, and to use that information for continuous programmatic improvement, clearly fall into this category as well.

The concepts underlying the broad area of curricular outcomes are viewed as abstract by many faculty members, especially classically trained scholars. In reality, these concepts relate very closely to the scientific method, and parallel such research-related activities as the construction of grant proposals. In the grant proposal process, the applicant is expected to plan and prioritize research activities so that the granting agency will clearly

understand the nature and scope of the project, as well as the time and effort necessary to accomplish the work. A successful research project must address a relevant question, and well-conceived hypotheses represent the requisite first step in designing studies that effectively address the question(s) at hand. Once a hypothesis is formulated, methodologies and protocols are designed to address that question. Based upon the study design, data analysis and reporting strategies are developed.

As the editorial noted, this process is quite applicable to inquiry related to teaching, learning, and assessment, whether at the curriculum, classroom, or instructional-activity level. Furthermore, if inquiry in this area is to have a significant impact on the quality of education and preparation of pharmacy professionals, then well-conceived research questions must be drawn from clearly defined, relevant educational outcomes. The vast majority of our curricular or classroom efforts should then promote student achievement of these outcomes in a thoughtfully considered and well-planned manner and assessment strategies should provide valid measures of the success of those efforts. As an educational community, we will be successful only to the extent that our "study design" acknowledges and reflects the complexities of defined educational outcomes that require integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors, and that we approach inquiry related to teaching and learning with the same enthusiasm, respect, and rigor that we reserve for other forms of scholarship.

In clinical research, informed consent of patients or other volunteers is essential to ensure that they know what to expect and why their participation in the study is being asked. In the classroom, we should inform learners about the goals of instruction (desired educational outcomes) as well as strategies for achieving and assessing those outcomes. This "informed consent" promotes cooperation and an open-dialogue among instructors and students.

Finally, our assessments and evaluation of educational innovations and related student learning should be approached in a manner similar to the data analysis section of a research project. Assessment or evaluation methods and tools focus on the primary research question (desired learning outcomes) and should be appropriate for the type of learning under inquiry. The best researchers align carefully conceived ideas, clear goals, superb study design, and analytical methods; curricular and classroom innovations should follow similar orchestration.

Our schools of pharmacy rarely have the benefit of individuals with educational degrees. Among the more typical clinician and scientist faculty members, few have significant formal training in teaching, learning, and assessment. In order to change the way our schools do

business from an educational standpoint, it is important that we all understand the concepts underlying the entire educational process, from conceptualization to conclusion, regardless of what terminology might be currently used. The scientific method, as stated in the original editorial, is familiar to most of us, regardless of discipline. By contrast, educational terminology is unfamiliar and seems to be in a constant state of evolution. Thinking of teaching and related inquiry in terms of the more familiar scientific process may be very beneficial to faculty members as they struggle to understand and engage in educational innovations to promote student achievement of contemporary learning outcomes in the professional curriculum.

Adam M. Persky, PhD
Wendy C. Cox, PharmD
Kim Deloatch, MEd, BSPharm,
Gary M. Pollack, PhD
College of Pharmacy
The University of North Carolina

Pharmacy: No Longer a "Second Choice" Career

Nearly 9 years back when I entered pharmacy for my graduate studies, it was not the most popular career choice. Like some of my colleagues, I felt I had entered the wrong field at first. It was quite easy to have felt that way as the decision for pursuing a bachelor in pharmacy degree was usually due to lack of opportunity to pursue a medical career. But as I set out to study pharmacy, I gradually started developing interest in this so-called "option to a medical degree." And today as I am nearing the completion of a PhD in pharmacy, I can surely claim that my decision was not all that bad.

From ancient times pharmacy was known as a branch associated with healthcare services. The word *pharmacy* was derived from the Greek word *pharmakon*, which means remedy, and from the Egyptian term *ph-ar-maki*, which means bestower of security. Times have changed now and so has the profession of pharmacy. Today, the discipline of pharmacy has made enormous progress and has matured as a distinctly independent branch of science, mainly through the acquisition of the wealth of knowledge and research about the vast array of therapeutic remedies. Of late there has been a great upgrading in the status of the pharmacy profession and now qualified pharmacists have unlimited opportunities to look forward to. Unlike a few years ago when a pharmacist was thought of as a laboratory-coat wearing person standing behind a counter dispensing a drug according to the prescription,

the perception of the pharmacist has changed. Students are now seeing the untrammelled possibilities open for a pharmacy professional and considering pharmacy as a career option of choice.

Going by the current trend, it has been estimated that there will be an ever-increasing demand for pharmacists in the coming years in both developed and developing countries. One might wonder why the number of people needed to work in the field of pharmacy is increasing. To answer this question, a number of factors must be taken into account:

- The rise in chronic health problems worldwide has resulted in a need for more pharmacists to work as health care professionals.
- The expanding pharmaceutical industry, fueled by more lenient regulatory and patent laws, has led to a demand for more trained industrial pharmacists.
- The advent of new drug technologies has led to an increased demand for pharmacy researchers. The current boom in the biotechnology industry is creating new positions for research pharmacists as well.
- Outsourcing of clinical research by pharmaceutical companies to contract research organizations has led to increased demand for trained professional.
- There is a feeling among the pharmacy community, that the field of personalized medicines based on pharmacogenomics will affect the way drugs are prescribed in the future. This will result in greater involvement of pharmacists in community settings and clinical care areas.

What are the career opportunities for pharmacists? It is time to forget the notion that all pharmacists do is sit at a counter and count out pills. Dispensing drugs is

certainly part of the job, but the career goes far beyond simply working behind the counter. These days, for every pharmacist behind a counter there is one working in another venue. Pharmacy professionals can get involved in a number of things and look forward to a plethora of opportunities.

The career options for pharmacy professionals include: hospital/clinical pharmacy community pharmacy, industrial pharmacy (research and development, manufacturing and production, analysis and testing, documentation), pharmaceutical sales and marketing regulatory affairs and intellectual property rights, academic teaching research, retail and drug stores, consultant pharmacy, armed services, and medical writing.

Apart from this there are ample opportunities for carrying out further education including PhD programs, research fellowships, and postdoctorate openings. No matter what venue is selected, pharmacy offers excellent working conditions, job satisfaction, and financial rewards in a job that can positively impact people's lives. Fortunately enough, now the pharmaceutical field has also shed off the "low payment sector" tag and moved out to be noticed as one of the finest career options with a vista full of opportunities.

The view of the pharmacist as simply someone in a white coat standing behind the counter dispensing medication has already expanded to include new opportunities. For today's pharmacist seeking a successful career, the door is wide open and the sky's the limit. Thankfully, now with the number of options to be explored, we can easily say that pharmacy is no longer a "second choice" career.

Ashok Patel
University Institute of Chemical Technology
Mumbai, India